

House Resolution 678

By: Representative Brooks of the 55<sup>th</sup>

#### A RESOLUTION

1 Commending Claude Sitton upon being inducted into the Georgia Journalism Hall of Fame;  
2 and for other purposes.

3 WHEREAS, Claude Sitton grew up on a farm in Rockdale County, Georgia, during the  
4 1930s, working side-by-side with African American sharecroppers; and as a teen, he loved  
5 politics so much that he would skip school to go watch the state legislature; and

6 WHEREAS, Mr. Sitton later set the standard for reporting on the civil rights movement; his  
7 stories in the *New York Times* were reliable, scrupulously fair, and detail-driven; his reports  
8 offered no quarter to the white supremacists who didn't want their discrimination and  
9 violence exposed, but they didn't romanticize the struggle for equal rights; and

10 WHEREAS, *Newsweek* praised him in 1964 as "the best daily newspaperman on the  
11 Southern scene"; Hank Klibanoff, journalism professor at Emory University, said that Mr.  
12 Sitton "got where no one else was. It was hustle, and a determination to see it with his own  
13 eyes"; and

14 WHEREAS, shortly after becoming the chief Southern correspondent for the *Times* in 1958,  
15 he was thrust into the recurring racial upheavals in Little Rock, Arkansas; over the next six  
16 years, he reported on the flash points and shifting fault lines of the civil rights struggle; and

17 WHEREAS, Mr. Sitton had a large impact on the reporting of the civil rights movement, the  
18 federal government's response, and the movement itself; and

19 WHEREAS, compared with other reporters, Mr. Sitton moved faster and had better sources,  
20 as many civil rights leaders carried his phone number, because they knew that if he was  
21 around, the world was watching; and

22 WHEREAS, Mr. Sitton didn't pull punches in his stories; when protesters secured few gains  
23 in Albany, Georgia, he took readers inside the fraying coalition between Martin Luther  
24 King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating  
25 Committee; and

26 WHEREAS, his stories sometimes moved presidents to action; when John Kennedy and his  
27 brother, Bobby, read Mr. Sitton's account of the Terrell County sheriff disrupting a voting  
28 rights rally, they sent FBI agents to investigate voting rights violations in south Georgia; and

29 WHEREAS, Mr. Sitton and his family settled in metro Atlanta around 1990 in Oxford,  
30 Georgia, not far from Covington; and

31 WHEREAS, Mr. Sitton helped start the journalism program at Emory University; and

32 WHEREAS, it is abundantly fitting and proper that the outstanding accomplishments of this  
33 remarkable and distinguished Georgian be appropriately recognized.

34 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES that  
35 the members of this body commend Claude Sitton upon being inducted into the Georgia  
36 Journalism Hall of Fame.

37 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Clerk of the House of Representatives is authorized  
38 and directed to make appropriate copies of this resolution available for distribution to the  
39 family of Claude Sitton.